

## **Секция 4. Внедрение информационно-коммуникационных технологий в преподавание учебных дисциплин**

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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO INCREASE UNIVERSAL  
COMPETENCIES TO CREATE BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE

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In 2007, I was fortunate to meet Dr. Matveeva of Ural State Technical University (USTU), who toured several college campuses in the New York area. While visiting the State University of New York (SUNY), we decided to increase universal competencies of USTU's students through so-called benchmarking or borrowing of best practices existed in the global higher education.

To clarify, we agreed to study differences between two educational cultures, one in Russia and another in the United States of America, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of both. At the beginning, we agreed to study the differences in universal competencies' formation first of all and go further if needed.

For a basis for such research, we took curricula of USTU's and SUNY's students with concentration in Information Systems and Technologies in Science and Education. Then, the USTU's curriculum was compared with the SUNY's one. Since universal competencies were in our primary focus, we mostly studied the two first years of formal training in these two universities.

From my perspective, both parties worked hard on the different sides of the oceans. Dr. Matveeva has been a curriculum designer at her university. Because of my adjunct teaching at SUNY from 2006 to present, I have been able to clarify any detail, which has attracted our attention at SUNY's curriculum.

Our study identified the tendencies as follows,

- USTU's curriculum is dramatically bolder when it comes to basic science and mathematics courses.
- USTU's curriculum in computer science and foreign languages is more advanced than SUNY's one;
- SUNY's curriculum in accounting, liberal arts, marketing, and management is more advanced than USTU's one;
- SUNY's curriculum is dramatically bolder when it comes to communication, message composition and behavioral courses.

After this finding, we decided to take one communication course of SUNY and to translate it in Russian. So we did. I was a course instructor under Dr. Matveeva's supervision.

The classes, which were offered to USTU students as a 2008 spring semester course of their choice, were a business communication course. The students to whom the course was offered had already taken a course, "Language of Business Communication." Thus, the offered course was supposed to be an advanced course

for students, who had already been familiar with communication basics. However, it took a couple of weeks to come to the conclusion that this American-designed course needed to be modified.

Basically, the course was designed to advance two communication standards as follows,

1. Communication Basics: to be proficient to communicate in an apparent, courteous, concise, and appropriate to a situation way.
2. Social Communication Essentials: to be competent to apply communication skills in personal and professional situations.

At the same time, the course was supposed to achieve three advanced communication standards such as the following,

3. Technological Communication Fundamentals: to be capable to use technology to advance the effectiveness of communication.
4. Employment Communication Essentials: to be able to integrate all communication forms in their employment pursuit.
5. Organizational Communication Fundamentals: to be skilled to incorporate leadership and customer service techniques to communicate with various business communities.

During the first two weeks of formal training, there was a hidden testing of all participants of the course. The table 1 represents the results of this testing.

Table 1

**The hidden testing of the USTU students at the beginning of the course**

<b>Achievement Standard</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Good</b>
Communication Basics	Bulk's average		
Social Communication Essentials	Bulk's average		
Technological Communication Fundamentals			Bulk's average
Employment Communication Essentials		Bulk's average	
Organizational Communication Fundamentals		Bulk's average	

The bulk of students, who registered for this course, were very good at technology. Their employment and organizational communication was acceptable. In the meantime, their social communication skills and, what is more important, communication basic skills were relatively poor.

On the one side, some students believed that there were some strict rules and regulations what should have been communicated in every situation and what should have not. The sources of this believe was identified quickly. The offered course prerequisite, Language of Business Communication, concentrated on modern Russian written language formats rather than on the basic communication skills' development.

On the other side, some students did not see any importance of communication.

Under this circumstance, the course instructor and supervisor decided slightly to alter the course and make an emphasis on basic communication competencies rather than employment and organizational communication proficiency.

Some changes were made too quickly to be good for all of the students who were taking the course. Nevertheless, the bulk of students responded positively. In our view, the major goal to launch the basic communication competency was achieved.

At the end of the course, I compared core competencies of my students in Russia and the U.S. Some of the data is as follows:

Table 2

**Comparison of American and Russian students' core competencies at the end of the course**

	<b>State University of New York</b>	<b>Ural State Technical University</b>
Written communication	Weak wording, strong organization	Strong wording, weak organization
Critical thinking	Stronger than at USTU	Weaker than at SUNY
Critical reading	Slightly stronger than at USTU	Slightly weaker than at SUNY
Quantitative reasoning	Slightly stronger than at USTU	Slightly weaker than at SUNY
Oral communication	Not assessed	Not assessed
Research and information literacy	Stronger than at USTU	Weaker than at SUNY
Technological literacy	Weaker than at USTU	Stronger than at SUNY

In fact, American students are taught more in college composition than Russian ones. As a result, I have got less structured works from my Russian students rather than from my American ones. Oral communication skills couldn't be assessed because of online environment. Most likely, the informational systems major of specialization of the Russian students explains their greater technological literacy in comparison with my American students, who have a wide range of majors from social work to civil engineering.

I must say that these observations do not pretend to be neither comprehensive nor broad. My Russian students are seniors; although most of my American learners are freshmen and sophomores. What is more, the Russian course is a non-credit one; whereas American classes are credit courses. Nonetheless, my comparison of students, whom I have been lucky to teach in America and Russia, showed some trends to deal with. During the summer of 2008, Dr. Matveeva and I analyzed those trends deeper.

The most important result of our international cooperation to increase universal competencies is the launching of a new course, Communication for Results, which consists of communication, marketing and management basics and is to be offered the coming winter to USTU students.